

MARYLAND BOARD OF EXAMINERS IN OPTOMETRY

COVID-19 CORONAVIRUS

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. License Renewal and CE Credits

- Will the Board increase # of online course hours permitted during 2-year cycle to allow doctors to fulfill credit requirements?

The Board has waived the CE requirement that up to a maximum of 30 hours per renewal cycle can be courses in optometric or professional journals with a post-test, or online courses with a post-test.

For renewal cycles in 2020 and 2021, licensed optometrists are permitted to take all of the required CE online – Non-Certified and DPA certified – 36 hours and TPA certified – 50 hours.

- Will the Board allow LIVE COPE and/or Non-COPE approved credit online to fulfill the 10-hour requirement of attending in-person trainings conducted in Maryland by an accredited administrator – provided that the course material is appropriate and approved by the Board?

For renewal cycles in 2020 and 2021, the Board has waived the requirement that an optometrist must complete a minimum of 10 hours of CE by attending in-person trainings conducted in Maryland by an accredited administrator. Licensed optometrists are permitted to take all of the required CE online.

- What if any other hardship waivers will the Board consider for June 30, 2020 licensee renewals related to failure to meet the 50-hour requirement?

As permitted under COMAR 10.28.02, the Board may waive the continuing education requirements in cases of illness or other undue hardship on the licensee. Licensees must submit written requests for waivers no later than June 30, 2020. Requests for waiver will be determined by the Board on a case-by-case basis.

2. Patient Care/ Specific Practice Guidance

- Does the Board plan to provide any guidance on voluntary suspension of non-emergent patient care during the upcoming weeks during the pandemic?

Licensed optometrists, Doctors of Optometry in Maryland, should seek legal advice and consult their personal attorney. The Board is responsible for licensing, discipline and promulgating regulations. Doctors of Optometry in Maryland can be guided by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) and the directives from the Governor of the State of Maryland.

Will the Board provide specific practice guidelines to licensees during the COVID-19 pandemic?

The Board does not provide specific practice guidelines. This is up to the clinical judgment of each practitioner based on training and experience. An optometrist should follow published, nationally accepted practice or clinical guidelines and standards of care. Neither the Board nor its staff is authorized to provide legal advice or statutory interpretation of the Maryland Optometrists Practice Act (the “Act”). See, Md. Code Ann., Health Occupations Article (“Health Occ.”), §§11-101, et seq. The Board urges you to review the provisions of the Act and accompanying regulations. See, COMAR 10.28. Should you have any further questions on scope of practice issues, the Board recommends that you contact an attorney of your choice who can advise you on health law issues.

3. State Optometry Specific Guidance

For State optometry-specific guidance, licensed optometrists are encouraged to connect with the Board. Board staff will be teleworking and have limited access to the office. However, licensees can contact staff via telephone and email. Messages will be returned as promptly as possible. In addition, staff will keep licensees updated with postings on its website and occasional e-blasts via Constant Contact. Please be sure to provide the Board with your current email address.

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